

**Abstract 116**

**TITLE:** Understanding The Culture Of Masculinity And Creating Effective Prevention Messages

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**ISSUE:** CDC standards for effective HIV prevention messages require cultural appropriateness and Sensitivity and are focused on risk reduction behaviors that curtail and/or alter sexual behaviors. The professional literature and prevention programs seldom acknowledge or account for the impact of the culture of masculinity which overlays the cultures of race and ethnicity. Therefore prevention messages targeting men fail to meet these standards and thus have significantly reduced impact on men 's sexual behavior change that would reduce transmission of HIV.

**SETTING:** HIV prevention program design, policy development, and behavioral and social science research.

**PROJECT:** Authors reviewed literature on HIV prevention theory and programs and on male socialization and discovered significant incongruity. The HIV prevention messages focus on risk reduction through limiting sexual partners and the use of condoms. However men are socialized to value risk taking behaviors and sexual prowess. The standard of culturally appropriate and sensitive prevention messages require the resolution of these conflicts if we are to expect maximum impact.

**RESULTS:** Authors created guidelines for prevention and program design that account for the culture of masculinity including: 1. the reframing of risk in the context of male sexual behaviors; 2. the determination of the multiple functions of sexual expression for men; 3. empowerment of men as responsible individuals rather than the assumption of power through culturally established gender prerogatives; and 4. training staff to acknowledge the culture of masculinity and it 's impact on their male clients. Sample male sensitive prevention messages were also developed.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** Blaming and shaming men for "non-compliance" with current HIV prevention messages ignores the reality that men are in fact "complying" with the larger, more potent cultural imperatives of masculinity. This double-edged phenomenon contributes to men 's continued vulnerability to HIV transmission as well to men's narrow options of culturally determined masculinity.

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